

Menaçant (On a threatening winter night, no one survived)

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by [celestialcello](#)

Summary

Towards the North, the ambiguous outline of forest rose out of horizon. They were not meant to be. They were not there before.

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I've tagged everything I could think of but I promise there's nothing too gory! Just a bit of spooky fun (?) and some good old revenge.

Original prompt list from tarmasz (<https://www.instagram.com/tarmasz/?hl=en>) on Instagram!

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

~*~

The first snow came early to Holsten. Too early, in fact, for a fortnight ago the town was still drenched in the sweet scent of late wallflowers and solidagos, bright and dripping. Overnight the mountain wore a silvery crown and the overflowing river froze into ice. Some were convinced that bizzare creatures were lurking underneath. Towards the North, the ambiguous outline of forest rose out of horizon. They were not meant to be. They were not there before.

Ravens gathered at the gate, hundreds of them like shadows rising out of the parching earth. One of the townspeople went out to chase them away, he never came back. They sealed the entrance with boulder that same night.

Only Madam Du Maurier seemed to know what happened. She sprinkled the steps leading into the Church with salt and began to burn sages on the altar day and night. She prayed until her knees turned swollen and red against the marble floor. She should have left earlier. She constantly felt cold now. She could no longer be sure if she had ever been warm.

The road leading the Manor was supposed to be fixed yesterday. They haven't been delivering food to the Verger for over a week now, no one went in there, no one left. Strange blue lights were flowing out of the windows and seams between the walls. A child found a bruised finger among the tall grass, bearing the signet of the family. She went home telling her parents that she saw a big black dog on the roof of the fancy house.

They found Lady Verger in a tall tree just outside the wall. She was in her sleeping gown, a pallid smile on her face, arms stretching forever towards the grey sky. Ravens pecked at the frozen flesh, and soon she was covered in patches of vermillion red and bruising purple.

Judge Crawford's wife took him for a walk beside the lightless river. They saw herds of deers crossing through its bitter surface in soundless steps. They shouldn't have raised the torch. Those antlers on their heads did not belong to stags. He shouldn't have turned his head. He forgot that his wife has been dead for a year before this Winter.

The snow covered the roads leading to the city, soon they were forgotten by everyone. No one knew the name of the place behind the wall, no one remembered the people there.

And then the night came. It never left again.

From the shackle she was hiding in, Abigail cried. She, too, knew what brought this. She wept and cursed silently to not attract the attention of Things that now wandered through the streets and alleys of the city. She could not forget the pungent smell as the raging fire consumed the flesh of the man who held her secret. Nor could she ever again be close to the river without remembering a pair of soulless blue eyes sinking into the murky, static depth of weed and mud. *But she did the right thing, she had no choice, she -*

Someone knocked thrice. She opened the door. There was no footprint in the snow, no wind in the air. She looked down, and Fredrick Chilton's unclosed eyes looked up at her in the ring of blood. She picked the head up to contemplate at its lips still twitching in the memory of fear. And then she too felt something warm around her neck. When she landed, she caught the glimpse of her headless body dropping to the floor.

Alana Bloom went to see the imprisoned Witch in the dungeon underneath the townhall. There was no one guarding it now, no one knew where they went, either. They simply disappeared, except for the witch. She pushed a bowl of water and a piece of bread through the gaps in the door. The Witch's smile reminded her of a hyena that was brought to Holsten by a circus years ago in her childhood.

'I can smell winter from here.' The witch's raspy voice echoed down the brutal hallway of cages and chains, her crooked fingers twisted in bizarre angles by punishments from the past. 'Your food and water were cursed. Take them back. Save them for your last dinner, Miss. Bloom.'

'It was them, right?' At the corner of her eyes Alana thought she saw something moving, but when she turned, the corridor was empty except for the candles lining along the wall. The flames were still. She suddenly realised that no one had been down there to replace them since the frost settled.

'You betrayed them. You forced the Hermit out of the mountain to cure the plague you have brought upon yourself. And when the Traveller tried to free him from the prison you built him, you burnt away the Traveller's skin and drowned the Hermit when he refused to give you the panacea.'

'That was not true! They were conspiring against us, watching us dying of disease. It was the priestess that showed us the truth behind their ploy, accompanied by sworn words from those who had mistakenly befriended them -'

'Let me finish the tale for you. The Traveller was burning for a whole day and night when the flame died in the last storm of summer at the foot of the ominous mountain. Yet he did not die, nor was he alive. The bloodied, blind monster wandered across the field that you thought would protect you. His lover took him into the arms of the cooling water. His overheating flesh warmed his torn, cold lips.'

The candle seemed to be burning brighter than when she came in.

'They swallowed each other's screams, their wounds closed and healed in their shared breath. Now their eyes were lit with the same fury. They would never be wrenched apart again.'

The floor was coming back to life beneath Alana, she collapsed, shaking like the last leaf hanging onto the dying tree in a blizzard. She heard rhythmic steps coming down the stairs from above her, unhurried, getting closer and closer.

'No one would survive, Miss Bloom. It is too late. Holsten belongs to winter now.'

She could no longer remember the way out.

End Notes

As always, thanks for reading! I have lately discovered this style in Tumblr's #gothic tag and decided to give it a go :D Would appreciate feedbacks and comments ❤️

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!